619 To the south of Tay is the Jubur tribe. This tribe is composed
241 of two branches, the Jubur of Jagjag concentrated around Tal Brak
233 and south to Hamakeh, and the Jubur of the Khabur from north of Hamakeh to Fadghami. The Jagjag Jubur have taken to growing cereals besides grazing, but the Khabur Jubur find little employment in agriculture because their area is arid and those who do not work on irrigated lands are mostly sheep grazers.

619 Another big tribe migrating between the Euphrates and Jazirah
241 is the Baggaret el Jabal. This tribe is completely nomad. It spends
233 the winter in the plans toward Deir Ezzor and migrates in the sum-
721 mer to Jabal Abdel Aziz. It used to cross the Khabur to graze in Jazirah but a dispute arose with Shammar Ezzor in 1949 over the ownership of some villages below Derbassiya, and supported by the Kurds, Shammar was able to drive Baggara back across the Khabur.

221 Of these tribes mentioned, Shammar is still mostly nomadic
621 though its lands in the north are good for agriculture. The Tay tribe is completely sedentary, Jubur Jagjag have become mostly sedentary, while Jubur Khabur are in a measure nomads because of the unsuitability of their lands, and the Baggara are completely nomads.

619 In tribal politics, Shammar stands alone. Tay and the Jubur
721 are traditional allies against Shammar. The Baggara are enemies of Shammar and friendly to Jubur. Raids of Shammar on Jubur are frequent especially in the region of Fadghami. The last big conflict between Shammar and Tay occurred in 1951 when over a hundred persons from the two parties were killed in a fight over the ownership of the lands south of the Rad.

622 The Bedouin Sheiks of the different Arab tribes formerly re-
624 ceived money grants from the Ottoman Government under the guise of expenses for the maintenance of law and order in their regions. These grants were in essence bribes to keep the Sheiks quiet. Unfortunately, the French continued this system, and relied on the Sheiks to control the tribesmen by giving the Sheik a fixed annual salary, each according to his importance. In this way, the Government implicitly renounced its right to deal directly with the individual Bedouin and dealt with him only through his Sheik.

This situation, which lasted until about a year ago, strengthened the Sheik enormously in the eyes of his tribesmen, and the Sheik
622 invariably exploited the situation to his personal benefit. Thus,
425 in the Bedouin districts of Jazirah, the rapid development and
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prosperity of the region during the last twelve years resulted in the benefit of the Sheiks who were quick to seize the meaning of the expansion in agriculture brought about by the introduction of the machines. They laid claim to vast areas of the best lands without opposition or control by the Government, and then rented these lands to machine owners, thereby getting rich at the expense of others and depriving the tribesmen of the possibility of tilling their own lands.

The concentration of land in the hands of the Sheik and his family is greatest in the Shammar tribe and in the Jubur whether though the Chiefs of the tribe own the best lands, but the Tay tribesmen took to agriculture earlier than either the Shammar or the Jubur and many Tay villages are owned by the peasants.

This short glimpse covers the Arab population of Jazirah, and we turn now to the other elements in the population.

II. The Kurds

The Kurds have been and are a vital element in the development of Jazirah. Their original country is the mountains north of the plain. Their language and customs have dominated the country so that even the city dwellers of Mardin and Nisibin speak Kurdish besides Arabic and Turkish. The Kurdish migration to Jazirah started in earnest after the failure of the Kurdish rebellion against the reforms of Mustafa Kamal. Some Kurdish tribal chiefs sentenced to death migrated with their tirbes to Syria. The French authorities welcomed them and they occupied the lands directly south of the border, greatly increasing in this way the number of Kurds already in the region. The Arab tribes saw their lands diminishing, but not being yet land conscious, they were satisfied to claim tribute from the Kurdish villages, which was paid for several years.

For the first time in perhaps nine hundred years, the French established law and order in Jazirah. The Kurds, farmers in their own country, began cultivating the plains. The land being fertile, the crops were good. The French authorities treated the Kurds well and the news of good crops and unbiased government treatment reached the Kurds just across the border. Migration became a continuous operation from the mountains to the villages of the plain. There were no obstacles to this movement either on the Turkish or the Syrian side, and the immigrants joined their cousins and relatives across the railway line. For this reason, and because a census was never taken, it is very difficult to estimate the number of Kurds in the Jazirah.

a. The Region of Deirik

241 In the region of Deirik, the Zarkan river and numerous springs
[illegible] in the villages make irrigation possible over vast areas. The region
began to be developed recently when the road was partly constructed.
312 Rice is an old staple, but in the last two years it have given place
to cotton. However, rice may resume its former place since cotton
diseases have become so widespread.

b. The Jarrah

The Jarrah river flows through Kubur el Bid and irrigates the country around it. Its waters were used for rice plantations, and recently for cotton. In winter its waters flow into the Rad.

c. The Jagjag

133 The main river of northern Jazirah is the Jagjag. Its sources are about thirty kilometers north of Kamishli, in a gorge in Turkey. It flows through Nisibin and Kamishli, crosses the Jazirah plain and empties in the Khabur at Hassakeh. Its total length is about 100 kms. and its average flow is 3 cubic meters per second.

3121 In Turkey and Kamishli, the river has several beds. The Turks,
425 unable to exploit it fully in their country because of its short flow there, follow the practice of changing the river from bed to bed in the summer months, so that farmers in Jazirah do not know when the water will be available to them. This uncertainty has lead the villages which have a right to the water to sell their rights for one or more years to individuals on good terms with the Turkish authorities. These individuals in their turn bribe the Turks to direct the waters in the bed which leads to their lands. One family in particular has obtained a sort of monopoly on the waters of the Jagjag in Qamishli. The Asfar-Najjars buy the water rights from the villages for nominal sums and then try to reach an understanding with the Turks. Since they have one or two competing groups in Qamishli, the Turks usually get paid by both parties and satisfy none entirely. The Asfars manage however to get the biggest share.

3124 Such an unstable situation does not lead to steady irrigation
241 development along the lines of orchard planting. The farmer is lucky if he can grow one crop of rice or cotton with the present

6: Government of Syria--25 G-4 (no date)1952 MD1 Syria MD1

LAND OWNERSHIP IN JAZIRAH

At the beginning of the French Mandates, more than 95% of Jazirah lands were public domain, and it is difficult to understand the land situation now without a study of the laws governing the acquisition of public domain as enacted by the Ottomans and partly amended by the French, and which remained in effect till January 31, 1952, when decree-law 96 was issued.

I. The Land Laws Prior to January 1952

The law recognized two categories of public domain:

1. Lands registered in the name of the Government in the same way that a private owner has his lands registered in the Department of Tabo, or Land Registration Department. The Government holds deeds for those lands.

2. All unoccupied lands, waste lands called "dead lands," in Syria which are not registered in the name of anybody and for which the Government holds no deeds.

The first category of public domain is very rare in Jazirah. Suffice it to say that ownership of these lands can be acquired by public auction sales, or by renting them from the Government after a price has been fixed, and paying the price in yearly installments while doing the improvements specified in the contract or sale. The operation is known in Syrian law under the same name of "rent with a promise of sale."

The second category of public domain is by far the larger. And the law provided different methods for acquiring it suited to the small peasant and to the big farmer.

The the small peasant, the law, accorded him five hundred dunums which he could own freely without any payment provided he informed the competent authorities of his intentions and obtained in advance an authorization from the Department of Registration. He could then go ahead and cultivate the area allotted to him, and after 10 years, he could obtain legal title to it, without any payment.

This method did not enjoy great favor with the peasants of Jazirah for several reasons. In the first place, the ignorant peasant, whether Bedouin or Kurd, found difficulty in applying for the advance authorization and in fulfilling the formalities required for receiving it. Secondly, the peasant aspired often to a larger area than that allowed to him by this method. Thirdly, the peasant did not trust the Government, from which he was used only to oppression and corruption during Turkish rule. He was afraid that by the end of the ten years he would not be granted the promised land. Fourthly, the peasant did not trust his neighbors, his Sheik, or his Agha. He was afraid that during these ten years and before he received the deed for his land one of them would manage to drive him away and get the land for himself.

For all these reasons combined, the peasant wanted a way that enabled him to receive more than 500 dunums of land, that rid him of the necessity of applying to Government officials, and that put in his hands an undisputable title to his land in a reasonably short time.

All these desires were satisfied if the peasant followed the second method of land acquisition described by law. The law provided that, without previous authorization, anyone can acquire title to waste land if he cultivates it and pays to the State so much per dunum. No limit was set on the area which a farmer could acquire in this way. The State was interested in extending agriculture and offered encouragement to those who reclaimed land. The area which a farmer could own in this way was limited only by his ability to cultivate and plant. He could at any moment ask the appropriate officials to make a survey of his cultivated area, ask them to fix a price per dunum, pay the price, and get his deed in the first year of cultivation. In the nineteen forties, the price per dunum was usually set at LS50.

II. Partnership in Land B[illegible] the Tribesmen and the Tractor Owner

To avail himself of these advantages, the peasant had recourse to the city dweller owner of a tractor. The usual situation was that a group of peasants have occupied a large area of about 10,000 dunums within the boundaries of their tribe, of which they were able to cultivate only some 2000. They offered the tractor owner half the 10,000 dunums on condition that he brings his tractor to the village

and cultivate all the area. Usually the tractor owner took upon himself also to pay all Government dues and the price of all the land as fixed by the Government, and to hand the deeds for the 5000 dunums to the peasants in one or two years.

In this way, the peasants got 5000 dunums instead of the 2000 they were able to cultivate by their own means, they received their deeds in one or two years instead of in ten, their partner from the city became responsible for helping them resist any encroachments on their land from the Agha, Sheik or neighbors, and they received their deeds free from any dues.

Around 1944, when demand for land increased, peasants began receiving money from their city partners besides all the obligations assumed by him and mentioned above.

The French wisely strove to encourage agriculture in Jazirah, and and finding that the procedure used for the acquisition of land was long and complicated, formed a Special Committee and empowered it to grant land and issue valid deeds while abrogating some of the usual processes of law. Some lands were distributed in this manner and the French were accused of using their influence to the benefit of their political sympathizers. But in general, the Committee did a good job of stabilizing and legalizing the ownership of some lands.

The great majority of the land owned by tractor owners in Jazirah was acquired in partnership with the peasants. A few of the inhabitants of Mardin and Nisibin had titles to lands from the Ottoman Government. In rare instances, a few individuals went to the Land Registration Official in Turkey and bought from him forfeited deeds covering very large areas. But in general the titles in the hands of property owners in Jazirah were acquired in the manner described above.

Because there was no survey in the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman land laws, adopted and amended by the French and applied to Syria, considered that the boundaries mentioned in the deed were the determining factor in case of dispute, and that the area mentioned in dunums was of no importance since the surveying services did not reach all parts of the country. For this reason, all deeds in Syria give the boundaries as exactly as possible, and give an approximate estimate of the area in dunums, except where surveying has remedied the situation.

471 The land problem along the Khabur is not to distribute land to the Jubur Bedouin who cannot use it because he cannot irrigate it, but to remove the hold of the Milhem family and to facilitate ownership by the entrepreneur who invests money in the land, installs pumps, and irrigates areas formerly arid. Unfortunately, the old laws and decree 96 work for the benefit of the river bank owner who, at the end of the lease, takes possession not only of his original strip of land which he leased, but also of all the new land brought under cultivation and irrigation by the lessee at his own expense.

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VI. Recapitulation

185 To recapitulation, the problem of land ownership in Jazirah is one of stabilizing the existing property rights for 57% of the area of the region, of distributing about 25% by the simple expedient of having the Sheik or Agha share his land with the members of his tribe in whose name he holds it, or passing legislation to enable the investor along the Khabur to gain ownership of the land he irrigates and reclaims, and of simplifying the processes of law so that all these functions can be performed and disputes between property owners settled and deeds granted within a short period. It becomes apparent that the success of such a policy is subject to a prior survey of the region. But this need not necessarily mean long delays because aerial survey at present is a quick operation.

The importance of the stabilization on the regularization of the land problem in Jazirah cannot be overemphasized. Besides all the advantages mentioned on page 27, land will come to have real value on the market and the wealth of the entire Jazirah will be increased tenfold. The famer will be enable to diversify his culture and escape the dangers of monoculture. After surveying the division of land, the farmer, working on his own lot in which he has no partners, will be induced to improve it with buildings, irrigation wells, fertilizers, and tree and vegetable gardens. There is no reason why the plains of Jazirah, wherever water is available, cannot be made to resemble the gardens of Damascus with time and an increase in agricultural knowledge among the population.

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

returning to become squatters among the ruins and cultivate patches of stony but fertile soil. Organization of this rather haphazard settlement and the establishment of a planned community based again on orchards and vineyards may prove a worthwhile undertaking. In the Djebel Druze, where living standards are low and emigration is difficult for religious reasons, a similar settlement should be tried, provided a suitable tract of land can be found. Here, too, conditions are favorable for the establishment of orchards and vineyards.

At present responsibility for settlement is dispersed. The Ghab Administration is entrusted with settlement in the Ghab; the Irrigation Service has the task in other newly reclaimed and irrigated areas; and the Ministry of Agriculture has the initiative for the dry-farming areas. The mission strongly recommends that responsibility for planning and coordinating all the work be vested in a single, independent Settlements Administration, which would also discharge certain governmental functions relating to housing, town planning and similar subjects. The settlement program will require a great organizational effort and a staff which only a single agency would be capable of mobilizing. One administration is also much more likely to apply the experience gained in the initial settlement work to subsequent ventures. The mission urges that such an agency be established promptly, so that the necessary planning may be immediately initiated. The assistance of a number of foreign experts will need to be enlisted to carry out the program.

If the four settlements the mission has recommended are established and the Roudj and a portion of the Ghab are settled, the total cost would probably be around £S 10 million. Under the mission's proposals, £S 5.5 million would be financed by the Agricultural Bank, and the balance met directly by the government. With these funds it should be possible to settle some 2,300 families or between 12,000 and 14,000 people.

Land Reform

While the settlement of state domain may gradually increase the number of peasant proprietors, Syria will also have to work out policies relating to land ownership and tenancy in the areas already under cultivation. In this connection it should be noted that Article 22 of the 1950 constitution calls for legislation to determine, without retroactive effect, "the maximum area of land that may be owned, exploited and disposed of, according to

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

423 districts"; to provide for the forfeiture of land "neglected for a period of
425 ti[illegible]; to encourage "small and medium properties"; and "to protect the peasant and raise his standard of living".

In recent years several countries have taken steps to break up large estates and distribute them among landless tenants. Where large estates are farmed in small plots by tenants operating with rather primitive methods, the economic advantages resulting from well-managed large-scale exploitation certainly do not accrue. On the contrary, farming by impoverished tenants may be regarded as a social liability and an actual or potential cause of discontent. In the last analysis only the Syrian people acting through their government are competent to determine what course to pursue regarding large landholdings. The mission would only point out that expropriation on a considerable scale would entail large outlays for compensation and would be more disruptive than constructive, unless adequate measures were simultaneously taken to provide new peasant owners with sufficient supplies of seed, draft animals and tools and to guide them in their agricultural practices. Where labor is scarce and land is cultivated on a large scale by machinery, as in the Jezireh, expropriation would manifestly serve no useful purpose and would result, instead, in a substantial reduction in output.

There are, however, certain measures the mission would recommend for serious consideration. One would be to prevent aggravation of the problem by enacting legislation to prohibit individual families who already own a certain amount of land—say, 1,000 hectares—from increasing their holdings still further. Another would be to enforce, as a minimum, the existing legislation, which provides that land not tilled for five years should revert to the state. In cases where land is utilized or exploited in a manner which is not in accordance with the standards prevailing in Syria, the
423 government would be justified in depriving the owner of his land. Finally,
651 the mission suggests that the larger landowners should be more heavily taxed in the interest of raising more money for development and of promoting greater social equity. Income derived from agriculture does not fall at present under any of the existing schedular income taxes. Instead, most agricultural produce brought to market is taxed at 7%. While this tax does not bear heavily on peasants who produce primarily for their own consumption, it is not progressive in its application to landowners or pump owners who sell their share of the output on the market. The mission sug-

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl

642 with public welfare." All subsoil minerals, solid or liquid, are
423 declared the property of the State; and the State, in the general interest, is permitted to expropriate private property in accordance with a law providing for just compensation. But Article 23 ensures that no "general confiscation" shall be permitted.

The Constitution provides in like manner the way of utilizing the land. It stipulates that land "shall be cultivated and not neglected"; and that should it be left unexploited within a certain period to be specified by law, the right of usufruct is alienated. The Constitution provides, likewise, that "a maximum limit for land ownership shall be prescribed by law," and that small and medium ownership is to be encouraged: "The State shall distribute State lands to peasants to whom land is not available sufficient to their living, against small rents to be repaid in installments." (Article 22.)[25]

642 Labor is regarded as "the most basic factor in social life," and
659 is "the right of all citizens." "The State shall provide work to citizens and shall guarantee it by directing and promoting the national economy." (Article 26.) The State undertakes to protect labor and provide legislation for the regulation of wages, hours of labor, allowances, and the improvement of social and health conditions. Trade unions are permitted to be formed within the limits of the law. Forced labor is prohibited except by law aimed at certain specific social and constructional services, and in case of war and emergencies.

642 Education is declared a right of every citizen. Elementary
871 education is compulsory and free in all Government schools. Secondary and professional education, though not compulsory, is also free in all Government schools. "The State shall give priority in the budget for the spread and expansion of elementary, rural, and professional education." The aim of education is defined as "the creation of a generation strong in body and mind, full of faith in God, endowed with moral virtues, proud in the

425 [25] On February 15, 1951, the Minister of Agriculture announced a plan for the distribution of 166,000 dunams (app. 41,500 acres) of State land in the Jazirah area among 554 Bedouin families of the Shammar Zor tribe. Each family will receive 300 dunams (75 acres), and each peasant, after paying the State LS 1.5 annually for 3 years, will own his share of the land. The State land is to be distributed among several villages, each village to receive 20,000 dunams (5,000 acres).

25: Warriner S-5 no data 1948 MI Middle East
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probably few, of the estates are the properties of old, wealthy families of Ottoman times, which still exist in Lebanon, such as the lands belonging to the families of Arslan, Jumblatt, Chehab, Khazen, but many of these have been broken up by the Moslem laws of inheritance. Other estates have originated from direct grants made by Turkish Sultans to influential politicians, as for example the two very large estates in the Beqa and the Litani valley. Others too were formed at the time of the general registration of property undertaken by the Ottoman Government when chiefs of tribes or villages registered tribal land in their names as their private property. Uncertainty about legal title to land gives the educated classes frequent opportunity for ousting peasant owners, and whole villages have come into the possession of rival groups of city notables, as a result of litigation among the villagers who have sought their assistance in establishing their title.

While the land-tenure system is thus a result of peasant poverty, it also perpetuates poverty by standing in the way of any long-term investment. The high percentage of fallow in Syria suggests a great waste of land resources, and there could certainly be some improvement in yields, even in dry land farming, if green crops were introduced more generally into the rotation. But the share-cropper has little incentive to improve the fertility of the land, since he has no certainty of tenure, and since the landlord will take 50 per cent of any increase. Since the landlords are not as a rule directly interested in farming, they do not themselves undertake long-term improvements in the land.

Three case studies illustrate the ways in which the land-tenure system hinders advance.[1]

One study relates to the large estate of Misherfe, near Homs in central Syria. This is 24,000 acres in extent and includes five villages, with 2,500 inhabitants. It is very extensively cultivated, only one-third of the area, 8,000 acres, being cropped each year. The land is divided into three parts, one with wheat, barley or *qatani* (mixed grain), one ploughed but not sown, and one left fallow. A small area, 200 acres only, is irrigated, though water supplies are sufficient to irrigate much larger areas.

[1] These studies, which were prepared for the M.E.S.C., are not at present available in print.

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Within this belt there is a large area of cultivable land still uncultivated, mainly for reasons of shortage of labour, lack of means of communication, and political insecurity. Uncultivated land is generally used for grazing, and in the 'Duck's Bill' the grass grows high enough for hay cutting. At present the cultivated area is some 481,500 hectares (1,188,000 acres), and it is estimated that an area about as large again remains uncultivated.

The population at present numbers 111,300, of which half are Kurds. Owing to its remoteness and unsettled state, there has been no survey and settlement of land title. New land is taken under cultivation under the old Ottoman right by which ownership is acquired if cultivation can be proved for ten consecutive years.

In the Jezira most of the land is held by large cultivators. In the Euphrates province much of the land has until recently been owned by the villagers, but now the land is passing into the hands of city landowners as pump irrigation is introduced (as in Iraq). The pumps and buckets are supplied against payment in kind by the town merchant or moneyed class; wherever irrigation brings more lands under cultivation, the ownership of the extra land is divided equally between the villagers and the suppliers of water.

The system of tenure is the usual share-tenancy; in the Jezira, according to local custom, the landlord takes one-eighth of the crop to pay taxes, and the remainder is shared equally between landlord and cultivator, the proportion being determined by the supply of labour. With the introduction of machinery—there were about thirty tractors in the area in 1942—the division into employer and labourers has developed: the landowner using the tractor on the land and employing wage labour.

Owing to the scarcity of labour, the position of the agricultural labourer in the Jezira area is better than in the rest of Syria. Health conditions, however, are bad: the Kurds suffer from trachoma and villagers in the Kamichlia district from malaria. In the Euphrates region, the position is worse: the agricultural labourer is weak and underfed, living a hand to mouth existence and exploited by all.

Both in the Jezira and in the Euphrates region there is scope

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
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ment, and the investors, inexperienced in farming and unequipped to deal with adverse weather, lack of water, and heavy insect infestation, obtained low yields. Many lost their own capital and borrowed money. 454 241

Some investors, who realize that their only chance of coming out on their original investment is to continue their operations and even to make additional investments, plan to expand operations. Future investment naturally will depend on current earnings which will be determined by production and world market prices.

Farmers who may be in a position to continue investing in agricultural development out of their own capital, however, will be a small minority. The need for credit will be great.

Limited credit usually is given to tenants by the landlords during the spring and summer, but most farmers need more. In the past, additional production credit has been extended largely by the merchants and money-lenders at rates from 15 to 50 per cent annually. A few large landlords borrow money from banks at rates as low as 7 and 8 per cent, but only against excellent securities. Interest rates to the tenants who have less collateral are usually higher. Merchants are discontinuing the practice of buying cotton before the crop is made at prices from 50 to 70 per cent of the future market price because in many cases the farmers do not make enough cotton to fulfill their contract. 452 426 [455]

The government has sought to meet the need for credit by creating an agricultural bank, but the capital is limited and size and volume of loans are small. In 1951, for instance, the bank loaned a total of only $5 million to 57,000 cultivators. Private groups are said to have loaned as much on cotton in the Jezira alone. 652 452

LAND TENURE

Land available for cultivation is plentiful, but confused titles, excessive concentration of ownership, and insufficient or restricted use of the state domains hamper development. 423

The government has a major interest in agriculture and the tenure problem. The Ministry of Justice reports that 23 per cent of the farm land is owned by the state and in some of the larger farming areas the percentage runs as high as 69 per cent. There is also a heavy concentration of land in large units owned and operated by a few wealthy landlords, with 29 per cent of the farm land in farms over 250 acres. Most of the large farms in the old agricultural areas are operated on a tenancy system, but many of the farms now being established in the new areas of the Jezira are operated on a day-wage basis with mechanical equipment. This is especially true of wheat farms. A strong middle class of farmers owns about one-third of the land in farms from 25 to 250 acres, and many of them cultivate their land with the help of tenants. Only 15 per cent of the farm land is owned in lots less than 25 acres. 423 471 241 [427] [464]

In an effort to encourage landownership, stability of tenure, and an interest in improvement of the land, a law was passed recently under which state lands are to be sold on long-term, easy-payment plans to landless farmers with a limit of 123 acres to a farmer. The plan was designed especially to settle the nomads. The principal areas concerned are the state domains in the valleys of the Euphrates and Kabur Rivers, which were un- 425 471 311 [166]

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
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COTTON IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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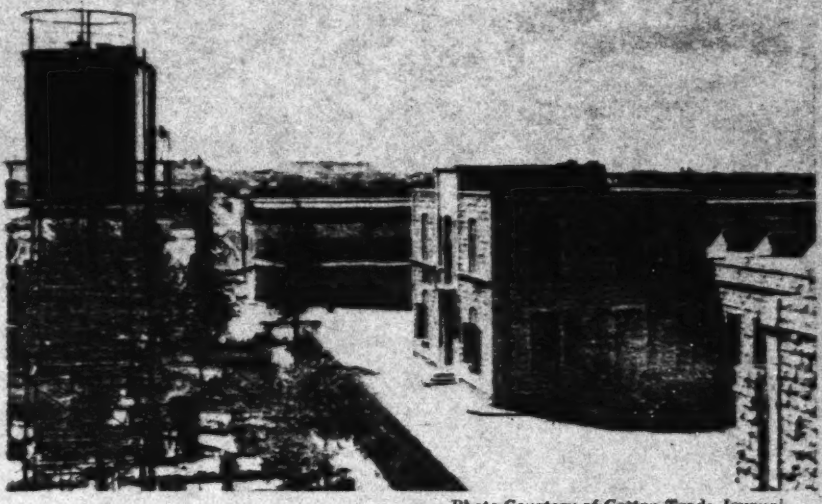

—Photo Courtesy of Cotton Trade Journal

All the cotton in the Aleppo region is ginned at this modern ginning center in Aleppo. Large gins (some have 10 saw gin stands) are located or are under construction on each corner of the square. Buildings are elaborate and usually cost about twice as much as the machinery. The grounds are landscaped like a campus.

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inhabited for centuries until a few years ago when farmers from the cities began developing them with mechanical equipment. Large landlords from Aleppo spent millions of dollars installing pumps, building roads, and in other ways developing these lands.

Although occupancy rights have been recognized for years, various government officials with whom the matter was discussed were strong in their views that these newcomers are squatters and should be evicted. They want to distribute the land among the landless peasants. The landlords who have made investments here are just as determined that they will not be evicted. The political strength of the landlords is given generally as the reason for the statement recently made by the head of the government to the effect that the new law will be studied for revision.

While the question of eviction is being debated, the government is proceeding to parcel out other public domains in small units to landless peasants. As this program is expanded, the large landowners are becoming more and more concerned for fear their own properties will be expropriated and subdivided, as has been done in neighboring countries.

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This dispute over the use of public land illustrates the struggle for power going on in Syria today between government bureaucrats and wealthy landlords. The government on one hand is attempting to force changes in all phases of the economy through its various control programs. These changes, however, are strongly resisted by the landowners who prefer to be free from regulations and regimentation. The outcome of this struggle may have a material bearing on the trend in agriculture for the next several years.